**Repent, Return, Restore Rebuild**

**Post-Exilic Books Notes**

Here was your situation:

You were enslaved, in prison, captured, lost

How did you get here?

You rebelled/were disobedient

You went after other gods

You said that what God has for you is not enough.

What is the solution?

You need to Repent and Return

So that God can

Restore and Rebuild.

Who is this story about?

It is about God’s people

It is about Judah

It is about each of us individually

It is about the Church

It is about any individual church

Theme of the post-exilic books: Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild. God came and judged his people for their unfaithfulness. They lost their place in the Promised Land. His wrath has now been filled up. Now God will come to comfort his righteous remnant.

The historical background for the beginning of our class can be found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Israel, and later Judah became idolatrous, went after other gods and other nations for their protection and became unfaithful to Jehovah. Jeremiah and Ezekiel are about God’s judgment on his people.

Historical Background:

722 BC Sennacherib destroys Samaria. Israel taken into captivity

605 BC God begins to judge Judah as well, as prophesied by Jeremiah, through Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael taken as captives/ransom

597 Jehoiachin rebels. Nebuchadnezzar returns, Ezekiel and 10,000 taken as captives to Babylon.

592 Ezekiel receives his commission.

586 Jerusalem Destroyed 70 years of captivity (Jeremiah 29) begins

538 Cyrus captures Babylon, ends neo-Babylonian Empire (Daniel 5). Cyrus decrees the temple should be rebuilt. (Ezra 1:1-4)

537-536 First wave of remnant returns under Zerubbabel.

520 Zechariah begins to prophesy

518 Darius says: Rebuild the temple! (Ezra 6:1-12) Haggai agrees.

516 Temple is completed (seventy years after Solomon’s temple destroyed)

458 (7th year of Artaxerxes) Ezra returns to Jerusalem, bringing second wave of exiles back. Artaxerxes: Rebuild the city of Jerusalem. (Ezra 7:11-29)

445 (20th year of Artaxerxes) The wall is still not built! Nehemiah returns and the city is built.

Note: Esther and Malachi are not in this timeline, because their timing is indefinite.

Probably Esther was queen under Xerxes, so predates Ezra and Nehemiah.

Malachi is not dated, but it has every appearance of being the “last word” from God to his people before the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4). Perhaps it is about 440 BC.

Old Testament Context to Post-Exilic prophets and historical books:

The context: God’s people are in slavery in exile. They are (symbolically) separated from God because of their sin.

This is exactly what God said would happen.

Deuteronomy 28:15 If you do not obey the Lord your God… You will be cursed.

Deuteronomy 28:36-37 You and your king will be taken to a foreign land.

Deut 28:49-57 The Lord will bring a nation against you. Terrible suffering. Cannibalism in Jerusalem.

Summary: Deut 29:22-29.

But….. (thank God for the buts in the Bible)

Deut 30:1-10 This is the theme of the post-exilic books.

**30**When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, **2**and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, **3**then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+30%3A1-7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5712a)] and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. **4**Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.**5**He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.**6**The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

All this is found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel

Jeremiah 4:5-6 6:1-2Disaster from the North!

Jeremiah 7:30-34 The Valley of Slaughter.

But… Jeremiah 27:16-22

Similarly in Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 4: God besieges Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 7:5-10 Disaster! Doom! 9:5-6 kill without pity 12:1-16 Pack your bags….

But…. Ezek 36:24-32

The six books we will be studying are the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Application for us:

All this is about our relationship with God, as a church and individually. We, too, sinned and went into captivity. We, too, were protected while in captivity. We, too, ultimately repented, returned, were restored and rebuilt. Notice Ezek 36:24-32 is equally (or more so) about us. This story is our story. It is about our relationship with God.

**Notes from James for Intro and Ezra Ch 1-7:**

2 Chronicles 36:6, 10, 15-23 - three waves of captivity (605, 597, 586 BC)

Jeremiah 29:10-14 - prophecy of 70 years of captivity

Two views of 70 year fulfillment: 605-538 (first captivity to first return) or 587-516 (destruction to completion of temple)

Ezekiel 36:33-36; 37:11-14 - prophecies of return. Both captivity and return show God's power and grace

Outline of period: Cyrus overtakes Babylon in 539 BC, issues decree to return in 538. Haggai & Zechariah preach in 520. Temple finished in 516. Esther is possibly queen from 483-465. Ezra returns to restore ceremonial purity in 458. Nehemiah returns to rebuild walls in 445. Malachi is somewhere around 430.

Ezra 1:1-3 - Persia allow for: goodwill, collection of tributes, acquire god's favor. Elephantine letter in 407 BC requesting to rebuild Jewish temple.

Cyrus Cylinder in British Museus in London -

“I returned the statues of the divine patrons of every land…to their own sanctuaries. When I found their sanctuaries in ruins, I rebuilt them. I also repatriated the people of these lands and rebuilt their houses. Finally, with Marduk’s permission, I allowed statues of the dive patrons of Sumer and Akkad to be returned to their own sanctuaries.”

Isaiah 44:26-45:7 -v. 26 Inhabited (return), v. 26 rebuilt, 45:4 restored! Cyrus mentioned before Hezekiah died in 698 (159 years before Cyrus captures Babylon)!

Ezra 1:1, 5, 6 - The Lord moved: the king, his people and their neighbors.

Ezra 2 / Nehemiah 7 - same list, possibly a compilation from more than one return.

Ezra 3:1-3, 10-13 – v. 1 together as one v. 3 Fear and courage. v. 11 Joy and v. 12 sadness.

Ezra 4:1-5 536BC or so 4:6-7 (note v. 7 in Aramaic) 11-12 Artaxerxes- Not chronological. Point is opposition (Mt. 5:10-12; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 2 Tim. 3:12 All those who seek to live a righteous life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.)

Ezra 5:1-5 518 BC ; 6:1-8, 13-15 - Prophets (Haggai & Zechariah). Ecbatana was Median capital; Persepolis was Persian. 6:19-22 Celebrate the Passover.

Ezra 7-10 - Final chapters during Artaxerxes' reign when Ezra arrives. Will be covered later.

**Haggai**

Historical Background:

605 BC Nebuchadnezzar attacks and defeats Jerusalem. Exiles (including

 Daniel) go to Babylon.

597 BC Nebuchadnezzar returns, Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, 10,000 taken into exile

586 BC Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and the temple. Takes

 thousands to Babylon.

538 BC Cyrus defeats Belshazzar and Babylon. Persia takes over.

537/536 BC The first of 42,000 Jews return to Jerusalem with permission to

 rebuild the temple. The ruins are cleared an altar is set up and the

 foundation is laid. (Ezra 1:1-3:13).

 Opposition to the rebuilding of the temple arises and the people,

 discouraged, give up and turn to establishing their own households.

521 BC Darius takes the throne.

520 BC Haggai preaches to Judah: Get busy building the temple!

Nov. 520 BC – Dec 518 BC Zechariah preach to Jerusalem. (Ezra 5:1-6:22)

520 BC Work begins on the temple.

516 BC Temple completed.

**Haggai:**

A Jewish leader and a prophet (Ezra 5:1). Probably fairly old (unlike Zechariah) from Haggai 2:3.

The Message of Haggai: Build up the house of the Lord, not your own house. (Matt 6:19-21)

Submessage: Discouragement is not sufficient excuse to neglecting the work of the Lord.

Haggai 1:1-4

v. 1 In the second year of King Darius 520 BC

v. 2 “The time to build has not yet come.” We are too discouraged. We need to be strengthened first. The leadership is not what it needs to be. We do not have the budget.

The song, “Excuses”

The Lord’s answer: v. 3 Hmmm…… This is very suspicious. You have been building up your own houses, yet you do not have the ability to build up my house?

When the church is doing well, we are fired up, but when things are not going so well we use it as an excuse to attend to our own affairs.

Q: Is it wrong to have paneled houses? Answer: Yes, if it means that the temple has no paneling!!! Yes, if it takes you away from the more important thing, which is building the temple.

Q: What is “the temple” for us?

Q: What are some applications?

Q: Have you been like this?

Is it wrong to pursue an advanced degree? Is it wrong to put an addition on your house? Is it wrong to move to another city simply for a better job? Answer: Maybe.

Haggai 1:5-11

Message: You sought personal wealth and gain. You received the opposite. If you want blessings in your life (Q: Who here wants blessings?) It is through giving first to the Temple. “Indifference to the things of God produces calamity.”

“You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little.” Can anyone relate?

So, what should we do? V. 8 “Go up into the mountain and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored.”

v. 11 God will withhold blessings if it will help us to repent, return, be restored and have the temple rebuilt.

Application???

1:12-15. So the people set to work building the temple! God says to us, I am with you!!! That is what I want! (Matthew 28:20)

They wanted blessings, but they had forgotten how to get them.

Zechariah 2:1-9 and 20-23 Encouragement from God for doing the work.

Read Zech 2:1-5

God knows that doing the work can be tiring and discouraging. God knows that we can be discouraged by the size of the task and by our limited resources.

v. 3. This new temple seems puny. We remember the glory days. Our self-image is taking a nose dive here.

v 4,5 My spirit is with you just like it was in the glory days. Do not fear. Whether the beginnings are big or small means nothing to God. We can do amazing things if we will put off our materialism, do the work of the temple and rely on God. Do not be deceived by the outward circumstances.

Zech 2:6-9 I love 2:6 “In a little while, I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry lands.”

Let’s say it together out loud!!! Do you believe it?

v. 7 All nations will come. A kingdom prophecy. If we repent, return….

v. 8 The silver and the gold….. the things you are giving up to the temple…. The things all your neighbors think is valuable. They are mine.

Oh, and I love v. 9 as well….

The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house.

Historical side note. If you look at the temple, you might not agree, but the second temple period was far more spiritual and glorifying to God.

Aside: Haggai 2:10-19.

“parable” of consecrated and defiled flesh.

Does coming into contact with clean meat make you clean? No!

Does coming into contact with defiled flesh make you defiled? Yes!

Defilement is a thing. Holiness is a lack of a thing. Holiness is purity and lack of defilement. (heat is a thing, cold is not a thing)

The message: sin in general, but especially materialism are contagious. Holiness in not contagious. We need to deal with materialism before God will bless our work.

Zech 2:19 The good news: If we will repent, then GOD WILL BLESS US!

Final encouragement: Haggai 2:20-23 v. 23 a messianic prophecy

**ZECHARIAH**

• Dated prophecies: Nov. 520 BC – Dec 518 BC

• Contemporary of Haggai

• Mentioned in Ezra 5:1-2 6:1-10, 13-15 516 BC temple completed.

• Jerusalem is in ruins. The foundation for the temple has been built. However, the

 exiles who returned from the captivity have stopped work on the temple to build their

 “paneled houses.” There is serious need for a revival.

The practical goal of Zechariah is similar to Haggai, but the methodology is very different.

• The book is apocalyptic (it contains vivid symbolism which represents spiritual truths).

• The book contains many predictive prophecies, especially of the Messiah.

• The book is eschatological in nature (it includes material about end times).

Quote: “It is no exaggeration to affirm that of all the prophetic compositions of the Old Testament, Zechariah’s visions and oracles are the most messianic and, accordingly,, the most difficult, because it is mingled and intermingled with so much that is apocalyptic and exchatological.

Theme of Zechariah: The Messiah is coming; get your house in order.

Message of Zechariah: It is time to build the temple. Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild a constant theme.

Obviously similar to Haggai, but the style is very different. Haggai: Repent. Get off your butt and build the temple, you lazy, thankless people.

Zechariah: much more subtle.

Q: Is your (spiritual) house ready for guests right now? If Jesus knocked on your spiritual door, would you secretly be scurrying around, putting everything which is out of order into order so as to create the (false) impression that everything is in order?

What if you mother-in-law showed up unexpectedly? Zechariah: Are you ready for Jesus to come back?

**Outline of Zechariah:**

I. 1:1-6 Prologue: Repent, Return, Restore and Rebuild

II. 1:7-6:8 Eight visions. Highly apocalyptic, not so prophetic

III. 6:9-15 Coronation of Joshua/Jesus

IV 7:1-8:23 Two Sermons

V. 9:1-14:21 Two Oracles concerning Jerusalem. More prophetic, less apocalyptic. More Messianic.

**I. Prologue**

Zechariah 1:1 November, 520 BC

1:2-6 Repent!

v. 2 Q: Why was God so angry with their forefathers?

V. 3 Q: What is the solution? Repent and return Return to me so I can return to you (Revelation 3:20)

Q: Do you need to repent and return? How so?

v. 4-6 What is God saying here? These faithless Jews are no longer around, but my Words are still around and what I decree will happen, will happen.

 vs. 6. Good news. They repented and rebuilt the temple. What about you? Are you building God’s temple? The temple was actually completed in April, 516 BC. They repented, returned, were restored and were rebuilt.

Zechariah 1:1-6 tells us the end of the story before it tells us the story. The rest of the book is like a flashback.

**II. Eight Visions**

1:7-17 The first vision: A messenger on a red horse.

v. 11 All is quiet. Is that good? The messenger reports the world is at peace, which is bad news to Israel as that means they will stay in bondage to Persia.

Is peace God’s goal? Matthew 10:34-36. But isn’t Jesus the prince of peace?

v. 14 Q: Why is God so upset? (because Jerusalem is still not restored)

v. 15 Doesn’t God want people to feel secure? (Amos 6:1-7)

Zech 1:16-17 This, in essence, is the theme of Zechariah. Q: How would the Jews in the time of Zechariah envision this being fulfilled?

Q: How is it fulfilled in our day?

The Messiah is coming: Get your house in order!

 God’s reply: (v 16) I will return to Jerusalem and rebuild my house! Do not look at outward appearances.

 Application: If your situation or church seems stagnant, do not look at the outward appearance. God can and will work in your life.

1:18-21 Vision #2: The vision of four horns.

 The four horns are four nations which scattered Israel. Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and Persia. The message: God used these nations to judge his people. Now they will get their come-uppance: God will judge these nations. Trust in God.

Question: How do you feel about the fact that God is a God of judgment on his enemies?

Who are these four “craftsmen”? I am not sure. Angels?

2:1-13 Vision #3 The man with a measuring line.

 God will make his kingdom into a city without walls.

The church will become very great and will spread across the world. God will protect his kingdom like a flame around a wall-less city.

2:1-2 Q: What is measuring a city about? Rev 11:1-6. Ezekiel 38:7-16 It is about relying on God, not on ourselves, for our protection and security.

2 Sam 24:1f David takes a census of the church. God is very angry! Why?

We should not rely on statistics. We should rely on God.

2:3-5 No walls. God is our wall? Question: Is God your wall, or is your 401K your wall?

Q: What are the worldly “walls” we tend to build to protect us from the troubles of life?

2:6 Repent and return! The “North” is Babylon/captivity. We were all once in the “North.”

Only come back, escape Babylon (sin) and come into my city (the kingdom of God). This scripture is being fulfilled before our very eyes in this day.

2:8 How does it feel to be the “apple” of God’s eye?

2:10-13 Kingdom prophecy. I will live among you (in the form of the Holy Spirit) Many nations (v. 11) Be in awe of what God is doing. Close parallel here with Ezek 36:24-38 and Ezek 37:11-14

Kingdom Prophecies in Zechariah:

Zech 1:16-17 I will return to Jerusalem with mercy. My towns will overflow with prosperity

Zech 2:10-13

Zechariah 6:15 Those who are far away will come and help build the temple of the Lord.

Zechariah 8:1-7 I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 9:10-13 His rule will extend from Sea to Sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Zech 12:7-8 The Lord will shield those who live in Jerusalem.

Zechariah 13:1-3 On that day…. Pentecost.

Zechariah 14: the whole thing!!!

And many more….

3:1-10 Vision #4 Joshua (the high priest) accused by Satan and exonerated.

3:1-2 Q: Who does Joshua represent here? Joshua = Jeshua in Hebrew = Jesus in Aramaic. This is a vision concerning Jesus himself.

Q: What do we see about Satan here? Are you accused (Zech 3:2, Rev 12:10) Or are you the deceived type (Jn 8:44)?

Q: What would Satan say to you? What would he accuse you of? What would he deceive you about?

In case you were not sure: The branch (3:8,9) is Jesus. (Jeremiah 23:5, Jer 33:15-16) The Messiah is coming to Jerusalem!!!

Zech 3:3-10 The symbolism could be a bit confusing here.

Is this about Joshua and Judah? Yes

Is this about the Messiah? Yes

Is this about us and about the church? Yes

v. 6-7 God: If you will repent and return, I will restore and rebuild.

v. 8-9 The Messiah is coming. Get your house in order.

 3:10 Have you invited your neighbor to sit under your vine by sharing your life and faith with him yet?

4:1-16 Vision #5 The golden lampstand with a bowl and seven lamps and the two olive trees.

4:1-4 What is he seeing? He is seeing, figuratively, the Mehorah in the temple, with an olive tree on either side.

 Oil = the Spirit of God = annointing by God (Heb 1:9, Ps 23, etc.)

 Memory verse: Zechariah 4:6. Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.

 The twin olive trees represent the permanent, unending, river of power which can flow into our lives if we remain tapped into God.

[4:7 The capstone is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10,11)]

Q: How does this make you feel? John 7:37-39 Streams of living water!

4:10 The seven channels are the seven “spirits” of God (Rev 2:1)

Stressed? Harried? Worried? Think about the two olive trees and the seven lamps!!!

4:12-14 The two trees, are symbolically, the priesthood and the kingship/governorship, which were combined forever in Jesus Christ. Jesus is priest and king! (Messiah is Hebrew for annointed).

5:1-4 Vision #6. The flying Scroll.

 Judgment on sinners and the enemies of God’s people.

5:5-11 Vision #7 The woman in a basket. Judgment on sinners.

 Measuring basket = judgment. 2 Cor 5:10 We will all appear before the judgment seat to account for deeds done in the body.

v. 7 Who is this woman? The woman = “sin” = Babylon (Revelation 18:2)

 Sin has fallen, Judgment has come

v. 10-11 Those who choose evil are taken to “Babylon”/captivity.

6:1-8 Vision #8 The four chariots. Judgment! (again)

 See Revelation 6:2-7 for a parallel passage about judgment on sinners and on the enemies of God’s people

**III Coronation Scene**

6:9-15 The coronation scene. The Messiah is coming!

v. 9-11 Q: Why is this odd? You do not give a crown to a priest!

v. 12 What/who is this about? Branch = nazer = Nazarene (like Zech 3:8, Zech 4:14 note Matthew 2:23 Nazarene) It is not Joshua literally, because he never sat on a throne.

v. 13 “harmony between the two” means between the priesthood and the government/king/governor (between Joshua and Zerubbabel). This was accomplished in Jesus who is both high priest and king

Q: Is there normally friction between the king and the priest? Yes!

The ruler (Jn 18:33-37) and the mediator (1 Tim 2:5) will be the same man.

 vs. 15 A great picture of the kingdom of God.

**IV Two Sermons Zech Ch 7-8**

7:1-14. Religious observance versus true worship of God.

7:1 4th year of Darius 518 BC People of Bethel come to ask a question.

v. 3 Should I mourn? Do you detect an attitude. Do I haavvveee to fast? (note: for so many years) Do I haaavvvveee to serve the poor, to share my faith, to go to Bible group, etc.

There were three fasts begun as a remembrance of God’s punishment on Judah:

1. The 5th month: to remember the destruction of the temple in 586.

2. The 7th month: to remember the assassination of Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:25)

3. The 10th month: to remember the capture of Jerusalem in 597.

Their question is, to some extent, a good question. Now that the temple is well on the way to being completed, does it even make sense to continue to mourn over the earlier destruction of Solomon’s temple.

God’s response Zech 7:4-7

Should we stop fasting in the fifth month? God: you were doing it as a hypocrite anyway, so what use were your fasts?

God: Give me your heart, not your religion. This is not an uncommon biblical teaching.

Zech 7:8-10 God’s solution to legalistic religion: *Act like God* (Exodus 34:6-7). Show social justice. (Note: in Isaiah 58:6 God also connects fasting and social justice)

Q: Are you struggling with lack of motivation in your walk with God? Solution: Go out and help a needy person. Practice social justice.

A great memory verse: Zech 7:9-10.

By the way: God’s answer to their question is found in Zech 8:18-19 No. Stop fasting. It is time to celebrate

(like JTB’s disciples fasting but Jesus’ disciples partying. Mark 2:19)

What you need to do is to repent and not act like your earlier countrymen Zech 7:11-14. Look where it got them!

Zech 7:13 They would not listen to me, so I will not listen to them.

Like Mark Wilkinson would say: “How’s that working for you?”

8:1-9 The Messiah will come to Jerusalem.

8:1-2 God can’t wait for it to happen. I am jealous for my people until the temple is built. God is zealous. Are we?

God says to his people, after you repent, you will be restored to me and I will rebuild Zion.

v. 3 I will return to you. We are the “city of truth (or Faithful City).” What a thought. This prophecy was partially fulfilled in April, 516 BC when the temple was completed, but to a fuller extent in about 30 AD when Jesus came to Jerusalem.

v. 4 men and women of ripe old age…. Each with a cane I hand… Safety security

Q: Is he talking about restored Judah and Jerusalem or is he talking about the church? (from the countries of the West?)

v. 9 (like Haggai) Build the temple!

(Skip v. 10-17)

8: 18-23 Did this happen at the time of the restoration? Not exactly. It is about the church.

God will bless our evangelism v. 23. A great Bible group.

**V. Two Oracles Zech Ch 9-14**

**Ch 9-11 First Oracle.**

9:1-8 Judgment on Phoenecia. After disciplining his people he will now judge those who attacked his people.

9:9-17. The Messiah is coming to Jerusalem. (do you see a pattern here yet?)

Messianic Prophecies in Zechariah:

Zechariah 3:8-9 My servant the branch (The Branch of Jesse Isaiah 11:1,10)

Zechariah 6:11-13 Crowning of the Messiah/Branch

Zech 9:9 Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem. (Matt 21:2-7, Mark 11:4)

Zech 11:7-13 30 pieces of silver Matt 26:14-15 The potter Matt 27:3-10

Zechariah 12:10-14 The one they have pierced (John 19:31-37)

Zech 13:7 Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. (Mark 14:27)

9:9 A great Messianic prophecy. Fulfilled in Mark 11:4-10

Q: What do you see about Jesus here?

Gentle Jews? Probably not.

Righteous Jews? Yes!

Bringing salvation Jew? Yes!

9:10-13 A kingdom prophecy. waterless pit = us before salvation

9:10 Q: What do you see about the kingdom of God here?

 Q: How will God create peace without war-horses?

9:11 We were freed from a waterless pit. Q: What waterless pit were you freed from?

9:13 Judah (Judea) → Ephraim (Samaria) → Greece That is exactly how the church spread. A very specific prophecy.

9:13 Judah/The Church will be bent like a bow. God will use us to do great things. He will prepare us for spiritual battle.

9:14 A kingdom prophecy cont. Doesn’t this contradict 9:10? Is God a God of peace? Isn’t Jesus the prince of peace? Matthew 10:34-36

God’s desire is for peace and the Kingdom is a place of peace, but with the world there will be war because the kingdom of God is at war with the world (spiritually). Only in heaven will there be peace.

Victory for God’s people in apocalyptic language.

9:16 We will sparkle!!!

9:17 We will be attractive and beautiful!!! (To those who love and are seeking God, to others we are the aroma of death 2 Cor 2:16)) We will be a city on a hill Matthew 5:14-16

What will be the grain and new wine for you? How will God make you thrive?

Zech10:1-12 As you read this, how would Zechariah’s hearers see this? How might we see this differently?

Zech 10:6 I will restore them… Q: to what?

Return, Restore, Rebuild.

Q: What is 10:5 to you? How will God do this

Zech 11:9-14

 God will judge unfaithful Israel for rejecting his appearing to them (fulfilled in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed). Favor = (old) covenant Union = unity of God’s people.

11:9 As prophesied in Leviticus 26:29.

This was literally fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem. Josephus gives a dreadful detail respecting a woman named Mary, who, in the extremity of the famine, during the seige, killed her sucking child, roasted, and had eaten part of it, when discovered by the soldiers.

v. 10-11 the old covenant will be revoked. Staff called favor = Old Covenant

v. 12, 13 A very specific prophecy about the Messiah. Fulfilled in Matt 26:14 and 27:1-10 where a literal potter’s field was bought for a literal 30 pieces of silver.

v. 14 Staff called Union: The Jew’s dream of a reunited Israel and Judah is dead.

(Note: Ezekiel 37:15-23 describes the joining of two sticks: Judah and Ephraim, but this passage is not about physical Judah and Ephraim, but is about the Church/Kingdom, as can be seen from Ezekiel 37:24-28 …my servant David will be king over them and they will have one shepherd…. David my servant will be their prince forever.)

11:10-14 must have been a bit confusing to the Jews who received Zechariah’s prophecy.

**Zech 12-14 Oracle #2**

12:1-9 God will bless his kingdom.

Who is this about?

Restored Judah?

The church?

Heaven?

Any individual who has fallen into sin and slaver, repented and returned and who is now being restored and having their spiritual life rebuilt?

v. 1-5 We will be persecuted but God will protect us. Reminds of Zech 2:3-5 where God says he will be our wall.

v. 6 Like a firepot in a pile of wood. Not consumed when all around us are.

 Like a torch among sheaves On the contrary, we will set all of them on fire.

v. 7-8 very encouraging. A kingdom prophecy. This is us! Luke 7:28 The least in the kingdom is greater than John the Baptist because we have the Holy Spirit. We are the temple of God!!!!

12:10-14. A prophecy about the Messiah and about the church.

 Pour out spirit = Acts 2: Pentecost. Joel 2:28-31

 pierced = the sword in Jesus’ side John 19:31-37. Note, God says, “they will look on ***me***” Here we see the deity of Jesus.

12:11 Hadad Rimmon This is where Josiah, the most righteous of all the kings of Judah, and the last good king, was killed in battle in 609 BC and where there was great mourning in the land. (2 Kings 23:29-30, 2 Chron 35:24-25 Jeremiah composed a lament for this occasion).

When Jesus dies and his apostles abandon him it will be a time of great mourning, but…..

13:1-9 Further prophecies about the kingdom of God.

v. 1. On that day… The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36-41) (more on that fountain in Zech 14:8, also see Ezek 36:25 about this cleansing water)

v. 2-6 I will bring prophecy to an end. Hebrews 1:1 In the past God spoke through the prophets… but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son. This is a specific prophecy that prophecy will cease in the church age.

 v. 7 The sheep will be scattered. Fulfilled in Mark 14:49

 v. 8-9 A prophecy about the persecution of the church. 2/3 struck down = those who were not able to remain faithful during the horrible persecutions under Rome. Would you be among the 2/3 who lost their faith, or would you be among the 1/3 who remain faithful even though your life was threatened? (a parallel to Ezek 5:1-4—the hair—1/3 buned, 1/3cut with sword, 1/3 scattered in wind?)

 v. 9 Even if you survive, you will be refined 1 Peter 1:6,7 This is a good description of the church in the first three centuries.

Zech 14:1-21

This passage has many parallels in Revelation 20:11-22:5 (especially Rev 22:1-5), Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Daniel 12. It is about final judgment and the final place of both those who obey God and those who do not. It is principally a vision of heaven and our final restoration to God.

However, like Matthew 24:4-35 it is a mixed prophecy, with some application to AD 70 (by the way, this sermon was preached on the Mount of Olives (see Zech 14:4) and Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives)

The key to understanding this chapter: 14:1 A Day of the Lord is coming…. This is an eschatological vision of God coming in judgment. Used many ways in the OT, both as a day when God comes to deliver his people and when God comes to judge his people or his enemies.

On that day… v. 4,6,8,9,13,20

The Day of the Lord in the OT:

***Is. 2:12 Is. 13:6-9Is. 13:10-13 Is. 34:4, 8-10 Jer. 46:10 Lam. 2:22 Ezek. 13:5 Ezek 30:3 Joel 1:15 Joel 2:1 Joel 2:11 Joel 2:31 Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.***

***Amos 5:18-20 Obad. 15 Zeph. 1:8 Zeph. 1:14 Zeph. 1:18-2:3 Zeph. 1:15-17 Zech. 14:1 Malachi 4:5***

Zech 14:2-7 has more affinities with AD 70.

Zech 14:8-21 is more about end times.

v. 5 earthquake in the time of Uzziah (Amos 1:1)

v. 8 Parallel to Ezek 47:3-12, Rev. 22:1-5 John 4:14, 7:38 Jesus claims to give this stream of living water. An allusion to heaven—the ultimate expression of the kingdom of God.

v. 10-11 Jerusalem will be secure

v. 12-15 But God’s enemies will be judged. Look at v. 12.

v. 16-19 Feast of Tabernacles imagery. To the Jews it was “the feast.” Tabernacles = living in safety with God. All the tents faced inward toward the Tabernacle where God dwelt. The feast was a remembrance of living in intimate fellowship with YHWH.

Here is the picture: All those who choose not to have a relationship with God will get their wish. They will be shut out forever from fellowship with God.

But….

v. 20-21 A picture of heaven. The main image here is holiness. “HOLY TO THE LORD” was inscribed on the gold medallion on the front of the High Priest’s turban. Even the unimportant items in the temple—even the cooking pots and bowls—will be holy. No Canaanites = no merchants? (either that or it means there will be no foreigners… all will be citizens of the kingdom of God) . All your needs will be provided by God.

**Notes on Book of Esther:**

Theme of Esther: God saves his people.

Esther 1:1-3 From India to Cush - largest empire of that time! 127 provinces (20 Satrapies - Judah was a province of the 5th, Syria). Where’s God? His people aren’t ruling; emphasis on Persia, not Judah.

3rd year of Xerxes’ reign (485-465 BCE). 55 yrs after 1st return from captivity (Cyrus)

538 BCE. Finished temple Jerusalem, nothing happening. No walls! Where’s God? People scattered / unfocused / limbo / stuck. Been there? Christian for 15 / 25 yrs, but rut. Where?

Esther 1:10-12 Vashti refuses Xerxes. She is beautiful, but also prideful.

Esther 1:17-19 The queen’s conduct will become known to all the women… All women will disrespect their wives. Vashti deposed as queen.

Esther 2:5-7

Two main heroes: Esther (Hadassah), who is very beautiful and Mordecai Esther’s cousin/foster parent. Both names come from pagan Persian gods Mordecai/Marduk, Esther/Ishtar. Way out of their comfort zone in exile. Where is God is all this?

2:15-18 Esther is very humble. Xerxes chooses her.

2:19-20 Esther keeps her nationality secret. Being Jewish was a risky thing. Esther submissive to Mordecai.

2:21-23 (don’t read it). Mordecai happens to overhear a conversation. Uncovers a plot to assassinate Xerxes and saves his live.

Here we see God working behind the scenes to save his people. This is biblical predestination. But Mordecai gets no credit and favor from Xerxes.

Esther 3:1-2 Enter the villain, Haman! Totally prideful. Mordecai, the Jew refuses to bow to Haman.

Esther 3:8-9 Haman conceives a plot to commit genocide on the Jews in Persia!!! If we are different from those around us, non-Christians might not appreciate that! Jews under a death penalty.

There is an analogy to the Jews in Egypt, to sailors on the boat with Jonah,but also to us who were dead in our sins.

God’s solution: He sends a Savior/Messiah prefigure Esther.

Esther 4:1 Mordecai learns of the decree. Calls out to God to help his people.

Esther 4:12-17 Apparently, there was a law of the Persians that anyone who came into the king’s presence without being asked could be summarily executed.

This young woman is in a tough spot.

v. 14 A famous verse. Mordecai challenges Esther. Maybe God put you in this position for a purpose.

American: Maybe God put you in the wealthiest country in the world for a reason.

College graduate: Maybe God allowed you to get that degree for a reason.

Beautiful woman: Maybe God made you beautiful for a reason.

v. 16 If I perish, I perish.

Wow! This little girl that Mordecai raised is taking a stand for what’s right! Isn’t that what we hope with our children? that when faced with dilemmas, they will have such confidence in the invisible God! Impress on them, exemplify it!

Esther is like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Willing to give their lives for the honor of God and to save God’s people.

Are you in a situation that requires much faith and belief that God is in control, despite all appearances? Lost a job? Lost a loved one? Spouse unfaithful? Broken relationship? Covid in your family?

Heb 11:1 Faith is belief in things unseen.

God is always working, even if we cannot see it.

Esther 5. You probably know the story.

Esther fasts 3 days, waits outside the door. Xerxes sees her and holds out his scepter to her.

Esther: Let me put on a banquet for the king, and invite Haman. Xerxes: What do you want—even up to half my kingdom.

Esther to put on a second banquet.

Esther 5:9-14 God intervenes again. Haman sees Mordecai, not bowing, and vows to ask Xerxes to impale Mordecai on a pole. God is working behind the scenes.

Esther 6:1-3 Again, God is working behind the scenes. Xerxes cannot sleep. Reading the record of reign.

What did he find? The story of Mordecai saving his life.

God’s providence at work here.

Esther 6:4-14 Who just so happened to enter the court? Haman.

Xerxes: How should I honor the one who saved my life?

Haman: Put a royal robe on him and put him on a horse you have ridden.

 6:10 Xerxes: Put a robe on Mordecai!

The world expects honor and glory. This is what Haman wanted!!!, but the honor and glory will go to God’s people on judgment day.

Message: Do not seek honor and glory for yourself, but for God and he will lift you up in due time (James 4:17)

v. 12 Afterward, Mordecai returned to the king’s gate. Did not seek any special honor.

Esther 7:1-10 (Read v. 2-6)

You know the rest of the story. Haman was impaled on the pole intended for Mordecai.

This is a story about what God will do to those who are faithful to Him and those who are prideful and do not obey Him.

Esther 8-9 Xerxes allows the Jews to defend themselves and their enemies are destroyed.

The Jews created Purim as a festival to commemorate their salvation. God is big on holidays and parties. Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Yom Kippur, Purim, Hanukkuh. Let’s celebrate the victories God gives us.

Lessons from Esther:

God blesses faithfulness, but also humility. Neither Esther, nor Mordecai sought great position, but God gave it to them. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. 1 Peter 5:5-6 …that he may lift you up.

Philippians 2;6-11 Jesus humbled himself, so God lifted him up.

Last: Esther is a prefigure of the Messiah. She was a queen, she, nevertheless, willingly offered her life to save the Jews.

**Class Notes on Ezra 7-Nehemiah 10 by James Shults** Ezra continued:

Ezra 1-6 Cyrus allowed return (538 BCE) and began temple, completion under Darius (23 years later). Esther during Xerxes. Ezra comes under Artaxerxes.

Ezra 7:5 …the son of Aaron. Ezra was a priest.

Ezra 7:6 He was a teacher. Ezra is the standard for a teacher in the entire Old Testament.

According to Josephus, Ezra did final editing on the OT and created the canon.

Nehemiah 8:8-9 They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning. Ezra the teacher was involved in that.

Ezra 7:8 He arrives in the seventh year of Artaxerxes 558 BC

Ezra has returned and been restored. Nehemiah is the one who will rebuild.

Ezra 7:10 He devoted himself to studying *and the observance* of the Scripture.

Ezra 7:11-26 Letter of Artaxerxes.

(Daniel 9:24-25 490 years from the decree for your people to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Anointed One, the ruler comes…. 33 AD

Ezra 7:27-28 God moved the heart of Artaxerxes. God did it!

Ezra 8:1-14 Because of his relationship with God, he gathered men to go with him.

Ezra 8:21-23 Humble before God. Ask God for safe trip.

Ezra was so reliant on God, he was embarrassed to ask for military assistance. (Nehemiah didn’t mind asking the king). God used both. He answered!

Ezra 9:1-3 The people have not been faithful to God. They have intermarried. They have not separated themselves from the world.

v. 3 Ezra hated sin so much, he pulled out hair from his head and his beard.

v. 4 “I sat there appalled.” Are you appalled at sin?? At unfaithfulness?

10:1-4 Ezra praying, confessing, weeping ,and throwing him down before the house of God.

Because of his example, the people wept bitterly as well.

Notice: List (v. 18-44) only has 111 people out of 42k (2:64): 0.26%.

**Nehemiah**

Nehemiah: God’s leader. Nehemiah and Joshua are the greatest leaders of God’s people in the Old Testament.

Ezra: The greatest teacher.

Nehemiah: The greatest leader.

Q: What are the traits that God’s leader ought to have? This is a very practical book. Not a lot of theology or doctrine.

Of course, this fits the theme of repenting, returning, being restored, and rebuilding. This is exactly what Nehemiah did. He repented (ch 1) returned (ch 2) restored and rebuilt (ch 3-6)

Nehemiah 1:1-4 Tragedy. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.

This is not new information!! What have the Jews been doing the past 60+ years.

Who cares about the kingdom of God like Nehemiah?

Nehemiah, God’s great leader, wept, mourned, fasted and prayed.

Neh 1:5-11 Nehemiah’s prayer. God’s leader is a man of prayer. And not just prayer, but great, humble, emotional, but also bold prayer.

v. 6. I confess the sins *we* Israelites have committed. Nehemiah could have said *they* have committed. He took responsibility for the sins of the people.

A great quality for a leader.

Nehemiah 1:10-11 Once again a prayer for God to have the king extend favor. Great boldness!!!

Did Nehemiah have control? No, but God did and he was God’s servant!

Nehemiah 2:1 the 20th year of Artaxerxes. 441 BC 13 years after Ezra came with the remnant.

Nehemiah 2:1-2 Cupbearer to Artaxerxes. Like Esther, took a huge risk for God.

Having a sad face before the king could lead to execution!!!

“Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”

Artaxerxes grants his request. So Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem.

2:10 A foreshadow of things to come. Sanballat and Tobiah are not happy. Do not expect the world to be excited when the church is being rebuilt!!!!

2:11-18 Nehemiah examines the walls of the city. God’s leader comes up with a plan to rebuild God’s kingdom.

v. 17 You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and the gates have been burned with fire. Nehemiah explains what he has observed.

v. 18 I also told them about the gracious hand of God on me and what the king had said to me. Nehemiah explains that this is God’s mission for them.

v. 18 Come, let us rise up and build. Nehemiah, the leader, calls the people to action.

God’s leader develops a vision and then calls the people to join him in doing the work.

Nehemiah 2:19 Sanballat and Tobiah. When we get busy building the kingdom, enemies will come out of nowhere. Satan does not sleep. He tries to intimidate us. There is no way you can do this. The university does not allow this…..

Neh 2:20 If God is for us, no one can be against us.

Ch 3 The builders get building.

When God’s leader creates a true, godly vision, the people will get behind him/her.

v. 1 The priests went to work…. In this chapter the priests and levites are leading the work. These are the Bible talk leaders…

Perfume makers, merchants, district rulers, gold-workers

v. 20 Baruch zealously repaired another section. Are you zealously working on the wall?

Ch 4. Again, when we get busy and zealous building God’s kingdom, opposition will arise. Count on it!!

4:2 Sanballat ridiculed them… read v. 2

Tobiah… even a fox climbing on it would break down the wall.

You cannot build a church here of 200, 400, 1000. No one has ever built a campus ministry of 100 in a non-college town. Your program for the developmentally disabled is a joke.

v. 4 What does Nehemiah do? He prays.

v. 6 Halfway done.

Sanballat and Tobiah are now getting concerned. They form an alliance to oppose the building.

v. 9 They prayed.

The people got discouraged and even worried for their safety.

v. 13 “Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places.

v. 14 Nehemiah: “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.

They did not back down (but they did not ignore the threat—they responded to it)

Half worked and half held spears, shields, bows and armour.

v. 17 Those who carried materials did their work with one hand, and held a weapon in the other. (Our weapon is the Bible)

Ch 5 More problems.

Drought, famine, heavy taxes—from fellow Jews!

Nehemiah confronted the selfish Jews (who were, by the way, violating Deuteronomy 23 by charging interest). Nehemiah demands social justice among God’s people.

Nehemiah 6 Sanballat and Tobiah try another tactic. Let’s have a conference. Let’s come to an agreement to compromise our religious conviction. Let’s go to Ono to come to a compromise.

Nehemiah said Oh no! to Ono.

Nehemiah 6:15 So the wall was completed on the 25th day of Elul, in 52 days!!!

Judges 5:2 When the princes of Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the Lord.

We need leaders like Nehemiah, and followers/members like those in Jerusalem.

Ch 7-13 The church has been planted, but the work of growing God’s kingdom has just started.

Ch 7 Nehemiah appoints spiritual men to oversee the organization of the city. We need leaders who fear the Lord.

Ch 8 Ezra joins with Nehemiah. His job is to teach God’s Word.

Ezra 8:5-8 A strong church needs skillful and convicting Bible instruction.

Ch 9 Nehemiah assures that the people will remain holy. The people confess their sins. 9:38 All sign a binding agreement to be spiritual.

Ch 10 Nehemiah works on the marriages in the “church.”

v. 32-39 Nehemiah makes sure that the people are contributing financially to the work.

Ch 12 Nehemiah puts on a celebration. We need to have fun together and to celebrate our victories!!! Neh 12:27 They celebrated joyfully. Choirs, musicians. Great fun!!!

Ch 13 Some years later. Nehemiah is still at it. Calling for reforms, kicking Eliashib and his worldly stuff out of the temple for compromising with the world. (v. 8) He purified the rooms. (v. 9) He rebuked unspiritual officials. (v. 11) He rebuked people for working on the Sabbath. (v. 15-18) He rebuked Israelite men who married foreign wives.

Let those of us who would lead God’s people imitate Nehemiah!

Conclusion: The temple was rebuilt, the wall was finished, but repentance had to continue. That’s why we need Jesus; he covers all our sins and exemplifies the right path. Return to the Lord (repent), Restore convictions and obedience to the Word, Rebuild his holy nation!

**Malachi**

Last book in the Old Testament: What are God’s last thoughts to us?

Theme: Covenant.

Message: Having faith in God vs being faithful to God.

Malachi = “my messenger” Malachi may not be an actual name of a prophet, but most likely he was a real person.

According to Jewish tradition, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were members of The Great Synagogue who assembled the OT canon.

Date: between 458-432 BC Between the two visits by Nehemiah.

The situation: The temple is rebuilt, but the people are relying in themselves. They are cynical and skeptical of God working. They are accusing God of not fulfilling the promises to Jeremiah Ezekiel and Zechariah of a blessed and prosperous restoration. They have faith in God, but their faith is in what God will do for them. They have faith in God but they are not being faithful to God.

Outline:

Introduction: God still loves Israel. God has been faithful to Israel. 1:1-5

I The Priests have been unfaithful 1:6-2:9

II The People have been unfaithful 2:10-3:15

III The Day of the Lord is coming Malachi 3:16-4:6

Style: Socratic. Make a point, Propose a question from a theoretical person, Answer the question.

You have robbed God.

How have we robbed you?

In tithes and offerings.

**Introduction: Malachi 1:1-5**

God: I still love Israel.

v. 2 God: “I have loved you.”

The people: “How have you loved us?” We do not feel you have loved us. You have not loved us the way we wanted to be loved by you. If you really loved us, We would have more blessings in our life right now. What God has to offer them is not good enough for them.

Jacob have I loved, Esau I have hated. (quoted in Romans 9:13) chose you. Look at how Edom is doing even today. I have every intention to bless Israel (if you will let me)

God: I made a covenant with you. Do you really believe I will not be faithful to my covenant?

This sets the tone for the entire book. In view of my love….

Aside: He uses Esau/Edom as an example. The Edomites were allies of Babylon when Jerusalem was sacked in 597 and even during the Persian period they occupied parts of southern Judea. God assures them (v. 4-5) that he will take care of Edom.

**I. Malachi 1:6-14 The Priests have been unfaithful.**

(and don’t forget that we are all priests)

1:6 “It is you, O priests who show contempt

Remember, that we are the “priests” of Christianity

1 Pet 2:5 a holy priesthood

1 Pet 2:9 a royal priesthood

Exodus 19:6 A kingdom of priests.

It is time for us to look at our hearts!!!!

v. 6 What does God want from us? He wants our honor and respect.

Does he want our money? Not really…. He wants our honor and respect.

v. 6 It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name.

v. 6 How have we shown contempt? These people were clueless about the fact that they had shown contempt for God.

Lesson: We could be religious think we are honoring God, yet in his eyes we could be showing contempt.

Me: I do not want to show contempt for God!!!

v. 7 You put defiled food on my altar.

The people: We have? How have we defiled you? When? Again, they are clueless.

v. 7-8 By giving me your second best.

Illustration from last night: We asked what was the worst gift you ever got?

Jennifer: A half-filled bottle of shampoo which was diluted with water.

They gave crippled or diseased animals. They gave the stuff they didn’t really want anyway.

Priests: Isn’t it only logical to give a crippled animal? We are going to kill it anyway.

Q: What do we give in a canned food drive? Do you give second-hand clothes to your parents as a gift?

We give our used clothes to the poor or our unwanted canned goods to the poor.

For us: We give our “left over” time our “left over energy” our “left over” money

God (sarcastically) to the people: Try giving that to your governor.

Many of us give more of our discipline, our effort, our heart, our attention to our jobs, our vacations, our education, our hobbies, etc.

Q: How might we be like this?

v. 9 Rhetorical Q: Will God accept that?

Q: Is it because God is a spoiled brat?

v. 10-11 God: If you are going to give me your second best, do me a favor: just stay home.

Q: Is God exaggerating here?

Q: Isn’t a little better than nothing at all? Answer: No!!!!!

Isn’t it better to put $5 into the plate than to put nothing in?

Isn’t it better to be religious than to be a pagan?

Q: Why is God so upset about such half-hearted gifts? Is it because he is an egotist and wants us to stroke his pride?

No!!!!! He gave his absolute best to us. It is because it represents ungratefulness.

I do not want to be in this position!!!

v. 12-14 The key issue.

v. 13a “What a burden.” Like Zechariah 7:2-3 “Should we keep mourning as we have done for so many years?”

Is that you? Special Contribution: “What a burden.”

Leader’s meetings: “What a burden.”

Staying pure: “What a burden”

v. 13b When you say “What a burden” God sees you sniffing at it contemptuously.

Q: How have we been like this?

v. 14 If you give half-hearted service (like a blemished animal), God calls you a “cheat.”

Malachi 2:1-9 Admonition for the priests.

A. Malachi 2:1-4 The priests have not honored me.

Very tough words. v.3 I will spread the bloody innards from the sacrifice on your faces. Malachi is alluding to the curses in Deuteronomy 28 You can keep your “worship”.

Why? Because you have not honored God (v. 2).

v. 4 I have kept my covenant with Moses…. This calls for reverence.

B. The Priests have not taught the truth. 2:5-9 Faulty instruction.

You have not taught the truth. You have compromised/watered down the message. You have made it too easy to be righteous.

True instruction should be in your mouth (v6)

Your lips should be preserving knowledge.(v7)

But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble (v8) violated the covenant. You have shown partiality.

Quoting Tyndale commentary: “Right behavior on the part of the people of Israel in covenant relationship with Jehovah was dependent on sound priestly instruction in the Torah and the virtuous example of the priests as covenant-keepers themselves.

**II Malachi 2:10-3:18 The People have been unfaithful**

A. They have been getting divorces. 2:10-16 (a metaphor for spiritual divorces)

2:10 Breaking faith with one another is breaking faith with God.

It is likely they were marrying foreign women to gain access to economic success—they were not trusting God to give them physical blessings.

v. 11-12 Marrying a non-Jew is desecrating the sanctuary.

v. 14 You have “broken faith” with a marriage covenant. In doing so they have broken faith with God.

v. 16 God sees divorce as a kind of social violence against the wife.

B. The people have stopped trusting in God 2:17 Where is God’s justice?

They are accusing God of not living up to his side of the bargain. They do not trust God’s justice.

Q: How have we been like this?

Malachi 3:1-5 The Day of the Lord Part I. (a previes of Malachi 3:16-4:6)

Malachi 3:1 “my messenger [my Malachi] who will prepare the way before me = John the Baptist. (Matthew 11:3, 10, 14)

v. 1 The Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. The Messiah is coming.

v. 1 “the messenger of the covenant whom you desire” = the Messiah.

v. 2-5 Do not let God’s mercy and patience cause you to believe he will not judge those who are not faithful to him. They will get what they asked for (for God to come), but not what they wanted (a free ride without judgment).

Are you ready for the Day of the Lord? Amos 5:18 “Woe to those who crave the day of the Lord.”

**Malachi 3:6-15 The people have been unfaithful.**

God is speaking here to the people, rather than the priests, so he keeps it simple. He encapsulates their spiritual issues in the question of giving the tithe.

3:6-7 God: Only return to me

The people: What do you mean we left you? When did we leave? What are you talking about? Who???? Me??????

[note: they had already returned. How can we return? They had returned to the land, but had not received the blessings of covenant relationship had not yet materialized because they were not faithful to God]

v. 8 You have robbed me.

The people? Who, me?

I imagine them trying to think what they had stolen from God….

Q: What about us?

How have we robbed you?

v. 8b In tithes and offerings. You have been stingy. You are under a curse!!!!!

Why? Stinginess = unbelief.

Bring in the whole tithe (Deut 12:6).

Q: Why is a partial tithe robbing God?

v. 10 Test me in this. [the word could be translated as tempt]

You have not trusted me to take care of your things.

**This is not about money**. It is about trusting that God will take care of us. You have held back. In your heart of heart, you did not really believe that God has your back. That’s why you gave better stuff to your boss than to me.

It is about being **faithful.** “Test me in this”

How? Trust fully in me.

v. 10b-12 Q: Do you **REALLY** believe God will bless you if you bring in the full tithe of your effort, your heart, your love, your money?

“the floodgates of heaven” = rain, abundant crops (Deut 28:12 blessings)

v. 13 You have said harsh things against me.

People? I have??? Did I say I hate God? Did I say that I refuse to worship God?

What have we said against you?

v. 14-15 Here is the key: You said It is futile to serve God.

What are we getting out of this? (Having faith vs being faithful again)

Do you trust God to give you a spouse if it is best for you? Do you trust God to take care of you financially if you give generously to the work of the church? Do you believe that if you give generously to Special Missions, your gift will produce an abundant harvest in your life?

Finish: 1 Timothy 6:6-10

**III The Day of the Lord Malachi 3:16-4:6**

3:16 A scroll of remembrance. The Lamb’s book of life.

3:17 They will be mine… I will spare them…

This section summarizes everything we have learned in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi

v. 1 The day is coming. For sure. Will the Day of the Lord be a bad day or a good day for you? It depends. It is a day of disaster and deliverance.

a. Every evildoer will be stubble. Not a root or a branch will be left to them.

b. Those who revere my name… The sun of righteousness (the Messiah) will rise with healing in its wings. You will leap like a calf in its stall. Like Bella when we open up her can of dog food. All the covenant promises and all the promises of Zechariah will be fulfilled.

God’s final words of the OT:

Summary:

1. Remember my law—remember Moses (v 4)

2. Be ready. I will send Elijah before that day. (Luke 1:17 John comes in the spirit and power of Elijah, Matt 11:14 He [John] is the Elijah who is to come)

Matthew 17:11 To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.

Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild. All this is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.